

Bayview Integrated School

Port Hope Simpson

presents

GARGE'S QUEER SMELT

This is an original play concentrating upon the catching of smelt or "smeltin". Port Hope Simpson is located in the midst of a prime smelting area and it isn't unusual for a person to catch over a hundred smelt in a single day.

CAST: Garge Salome Russell
Sarah, Garge's Wife Colleen Russell
Tom, Garge's Nephew Peter Kippenhuck
Maggie, Tom's Mother Veronica Lawless
Jake, Garge's Buddy Darneil Sampson
John Henry, Garge's Maryhannah Ward
Buddy

NARRATOR: Todd Penny

STAGE

MANAGER: Andrew Sampson

TEACHER: Wayne Fry

Labrador
Arts Festival,
"83"



"GARGE'S QUEER SMELT" is an original play, written at Bayview Integrated School in Port Hope Simpson. It concentrates upon the catching of smelt or "smeltin" to use the local expression.

To catch smelt, one must first drill or punch holes in the ice. A common hook on a lead-weightened line and some bait is all that's required. This line is then wrapped around a short stick, anywhere from five to ten inches in length. The hook is lowered through a hole in the ice, pulled up a little distance from the bottom and "jiggled". Port Hope Simpson is located in the midst of a prime smelting area and it isn't unusual for a person to catch over a hundred smelt in a single day. In the old days, it was more of a necessity to supplement the diet, but more recently smelting has become an enjoyable past-time during early Spring.

As I said before, "GARGE'S QUEER SMELT" is centered on "smeltin". The characters are Garge (a 60 year-old, who has never been outside Labrador), Sarah (Garge's wife, who refuses to take second place to any man, especially concerning smelting), Tom (Garge's well-educated nephew, who likes to play tricks), Maggie (Tom's mother and close friend of Sarah), and Jake and John Henry (Garge's buddies). The play opens in Garge's kitchen, where the men are speculating on the upcoming smelt season.

"GARGE'S QUEER SMELT"

CHARACTERS:

GARGE: A 60 year-old man, who has never been outside Labrador. Acted by Salome Russell

SARAH: Garge's wife, who refuses to take second place to any man, especially concerning smelting. Acted by Colleen Russell

TOM: Garge's well-educated nephew, who likes to play tricks. Acted by Peter Kippenhuck

MAGGIE: Tom's mother and close friend of Sarah. Acted by Veronica Lawless

JAKE: Garge's buddy. Acted by Darnell Sampson

JOHN
HENRY: Garge's buddy. Acted by Jim Ward

MATERIALS: A table, beer mugs, 2 pipes, knitting needles and yarn, smelting hook and smelt, diving suit and goggles, 3 tree branches, a boot, and old clothes.

"GARGE'S QUEER SMELT"

SCENE ONE

Setting: Garge's kitchen. Garge, Jake and John Henry are sitting around the table. Sarah is a little distance away, knitting.

GARGE: Well, me boys, 'tis dat time again.

JAKE: Yes, Garge, me son. I twas talkin to Uncle Abe the smarnin an e sed twas tousans a smelts up the lake yesday.

GARGE: Yes boy, I sponse we'll have to go up and catch a few the mar marnin. What d'ya tink John Henry?

JOHN HENRY: Well Garge boy, I got no choice cause all me lassie is gone and most a me yudder grub is gone too.

GARGE: Yes John Henry me boy, I got some grub left but if I don't go Sarah won't shut her mouth fer a month.

SARAH: (overhears what Garge has said) Garge, me son, you don't have to catch any smelts for me. I've caught more smelts in one day den ye all caught in yer life.

GARGE: Now Sare me darlin, shut yer mouth fer a change fer God's sake if no one else's.

TOM: (enter Tom) Good day. How are all of you?

GARGE: Now Tom me son, yer livin down here this year, not up in Carbonear where you learned all dat nice talk last year. What d'ya say Jake?

JAKE: Yes Tom, you should heed yer uncle cause he's older dan you and knows more. That nice talk -- sure we don't know what half dem words is.

SARAH: (mad) Now ye all leave Tommy alone cause he got some edumacation er whatever ye calls it and wants to talk nice and learn new stuff not like ye old bats who tinks a crow is black not white and tinks ye can catch more smelts than me. Well I'm goin to bed but I'll be up the lake before ye the mar marnin. (To Tom) Tell yer mother to come over 5 o'clock. (To Garge) You can get your own supper if you wants to eat. (Sarah leaves)

TOM: Uncle Garge me son, if you tinks you're gonna beat Aunt Sare you better leave now.

GARGE: Now, Tom me boy, you knows as well as the rest of dat all she catches are the ones with the eyes gone out of um.

TOM: It's still smelts and who wants to eat the eyes anyway. (Stops) I forgot the reason I came in but it was to tell you that Uncle Efe just got here with the mail. I saw the dogs come down over Bennets Hill myself. Well I've got to go now because I'm expecting my diver's suit in the mail. (Tom laughs) I'll be back tomorrow morning to see what kind of smelts you caught. (He leaves)

GARGE: Now what is Tom talking about, a diver's suit. Who would want to dress like a diver, you know would wings, feathers and especially dat yellor beak. When they goes to NEFD and comes back day talks all kinds of stuff dat ya needs a fark and knife to pick out.
(Jake and John Henry rise)

JAKE: We're goin home now Garge boy, but we'll be back the mar marnin ta go up the lake wid ya.

JOHN HENRY: Garge, ya don't tink ya can really beat Sare do ya after all the rock cods ya caught last year cause you had yer hook too close to the bottom.

GARGE: Now John Henry fergit about dat cause Sare don't know an if she did she wuden let me fergit it. (Jake and John Henry walks towards the door) See ya the mar boys!

C U R T A I N

SCENE TWO

Setting: On the ice. Sarah and Maggie are fishing when Tom arrives.

SARAH: Good marnin Tom me boy. What's you doin here?

TOM: Just checking up on mother. (laughs) Actually, I was just wondering if you two would like to see a trick played on Uncle Garge?

MAGGIE: Yes me son anytime.

TOM: Would you two help me?

SARAH: Yes me son, you tell us what to do.

TOM: (pulling out the diving equipment from under his coat) Now ma maid, this stuff is for diving. You see I can put this on and go under the water for a long time. I can even breathe.

MAGGIE: (frightened) My God, Tom, I can't let ya do that!

TOM: (pulling out the diving equipment from under his coat) Now, now my maid, it's going to be allright. When I was up to NFLD last year we did this all the time. You see my plan is that I'm going down there and put some old stuff on Uncle Garge's hook. After a while I'm going to come up through the hole and frighten Uncle Garge and them. All you have to do is run when they do.

MAGGIE: O.K. Tom, me boy, but watch what you is doin.

SARAH: Be careful, but make sure it works.

(Tom leaves and goes understage. In walks Garge, Jake and John Henry with a tree each)

GARGE: Yu ain't got any yet Sare me dear but dat was expected. You even had to bring Maggie wid ya.

SARAH: (grinning) Oh Garge by, we'll just stay and see what you get, if we don't get any.

(Garge, Jake & John Henry arrange their trees to sit on. They sit close together. While they are doing so, Sarah catches a smelt)

SARAH: I got one!

GARGE: Give me an eye.

SARAH: There's n'ere eye in this one Garge boy.

GARGE: (laughing) See boys, I told you so. She only catches blind smelts. I've yet to see her catch one with eyes in it.

SARAH: Garge me son I got you beat already and I heard last night that all you catches is rock cods, or some other junk.

GARGE: Boys I got one! (pulls it up and it's a boot)

SARAH: (Laughing at Garge) See what I means.

GARGE: Shut yer mouth Sare cause the once you'll get a rock cod or something on your hook and you'll be frightened to death.

SARAH: We'll see Garge boy, we'll see.

GARGE: (jumps up) I got one this time and he's a big one too. (pulls it up, Tom in his diving suit comes up through the hole) Oh my God, boys! (Jack and John Henry see also. The three men run off the stage.)

TOM: (Getting out of the hole and taking off his goggles) Aunt Sare, Ma, my darlings, I guess we did it! (The three bend over in laughter.)

SCENE THREE

Setting: Garge's kitchen. Garge, Jake, and John Henry around the table. Sarah and Maggie is knitting nearby.

JAKE: "Well Garge me son, I'm not goin smeltin no more sposin thee all starves to death.

JOHN HENRY: No sir, me eiddler.

GARGE: (to Sarah) Sarah how come you an Mag didn't run when we seen dat big ting I got on the hook?

SARAH: We didn't see anything. We just thought ye left cause we was beatin ye.

GARGE: Well if you seen what we did you wouldn't care who beat. I was home fer God's sake before I remembered we left ye on the ice.

SARAH: What odds, we beat ye anyhow.

GARGE: Now Sare, I'm not concerned about the smelts, it's dat big ting I got on the hook. Nobody knows what it could be. Perhaps if we had some larnin we might know what its called.

SARAH: What about Tom, he went to school up the N.F.L.D. last year. He might know.

GARGE: Yes me dear, I'll ask him. He said he was coming over the day to see what we caught. I bet he won't believe the story about what I caught.

(Enter Tom)

GARGE: Tom me son, I wants to know someting now and you got the edumacation so you should know.

TOM: Yes Uncle Garge, what is it?

GARGE: Well the day when we was smeltin, I got sumpin on me hook. It frightened us. You see Sarah was too far away to see it. We ran home but she stayed and I fergot her.

TOM: Well what did it look like?

GARGE: Well, I didn't see much Tom me son, but it seems to me dat it looked kinda - QUEER - if ya knows what I means.

TOM: I'm not sure if I do know sir.

GARGE: An it seems to me it was kinda skinny and funny looking.
Come to tink of it, Tom me boy, the only part I really seen
looked like this. (cupping his hands around his eyes)

TOM: (turns his back to Garge, puts on the goggles and turns to
face Garge)
You mean like this?
(Tom runs, Garge stares, then PURSUES)